

Message Text

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ACTION XMB-04

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R 231335Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6368

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 0961

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECON, OTRA, SY

SUBJECT: VISIT OF EXIMBANK OFFICIALS

REF: STATE 41831

1. EMBASSY WARMLY WELCOMES PROPOSED VISIT TO SYRIA OF EXIMBANK OFFICIALS TOM MORAN, DEP V-P, AND CHARLES HAMMOND, ECONOMIST, AFRICA AND MIDDLE EAST DIVISION. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THIS WILL BE FIRST VISIT TO SYRIA BY EXIMBANK OFFICIALS SINCE RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS IN JUNE 1974, AND WE BELIEVE SYRIAN OFFICIALS AND PRIVATE SECTOR WILL VERY MUCH WANT TO MEET WITH EXIMBANK OFFICIALS. VISIT WILL BE TIMELY FOLLOW-ON TO VISIT OF SECRETARY SIMON AND OPIC EXEC V-P DAVID GREGG.

2. WE NEED FIRM ITINERARY SOONEST IN ORDER TO SUBMIT OFFICIAL EMBASSY NOTE TO MFA WITH COPIES TO OTHER CONCERNED SARG MINISTRIES TO PIN DOWN MEETINGS WITH KEY SARG OFFICIALS AND TO MAKE HOTEL RESERVATIONS WHICH ALWAYS DIFFICULT IN DAMASCUS. EMBASSY WILL ARRANGE SUCH APPOINTMENTS AND WOULD APPRECIATE FURTHER GUIDANCE, BASED ON OUTLINE NOTED BELOW, RE EXIM'S SPECIFIC INTERESTS. PLEASE NOTE THAT FRIDAY IS EQUIVALENT OF SABBATH IN SYRIA AND WE ARE UNABLE TO OBTAIN APPOINTMENTS WITH SARG OFFICIALS ON THAT DAY. ALSO, TWO SYRIAN HOLIDAYS FALL WITHIN MARCH 5-22 TRAVEL PERIOD INDICATED

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IN REFTTEL: MARCH 8, MONDAY, REVOLUTION DAY, AND CA MARCH 15, PROPHET'S BIRTHDAY (BASED ON LUNAR CALENDAR AND EXACT

DATE NOT ANNOUNCED BY SARG FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS UNTIL THREE DAYS IN ADVANCE.) ALSO IMPORTANT IS FACT MINECON IMADI AND POSSIBLY OTHER KEY SARG OFFICIALS WILL BE ABSENT MARCH 15-17, ACCOMPANYING PRESIDENT ASAD TO PARIS.

3. FOR EXIM'S CONSIDERATION, WE SUGGEST FOLLOWING WORK DAY SCHEDULE FOR DAMASCUS:

A. DAY ONE:

(1) EMBASSY/AID BRIEFING ON ASSESSMENT AND OUTLOOK OF SYRIAN ECONOMY AND DISCUSSION BY EXIM OF "DIFFICULT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS" IN SYRIA (PARA 2 REFTEL).

(2) DISCUSSION IN EMBASSY WITH EXIM LAWYER HAZEM K. JAZZAR, WHO WORKING ON BOUSTANY CLAIM. (WE WOULD APPRECIATE REPLY TO DAMASCUS 680 AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.)

(3) APPOINTMENT WITH MINISTER OF ECONOMY AND FOREIGN TRADE, DR. MOHAMMAD AL-IMADI AND HIS DEPUTY MINISTER (FOR BANKING) DR. ABDULLAH AZMEH (THESE ARE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE OFFICIALS IN SARG RE OUTSTANDING BOUSTANY CLAIM, SYRIAN BANKING SYSTEM AND NEED FOR EXIM-TYPE FINANCING).

(4) APPOINTMENT WITH CENTRAL BANK GOVERNOR NASSOUH DAKKAK OR VICE GOVERNOR TARIK ATASSI FOR GENERAL REVIEW OF SYRIAN ECONOMY. CALL ON USAMA MALKI, HEAD OF CENTRAL BANK RESEARCH DEPARTMENT WOULD ALSO BE USEFUL.

(5) AFTERNOON, AFTER SARG OFFICE CLOSING HOUR OF 1400, COULD BE DEVOTED TO LUNCHEON HOSTED BY SARG OR ECONOFF WITH KEY ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES. (IF VISIT OCCURS MARCH 13, MORAN AND HAMMOND CORDIALLY INVITED TO ALREADY SCHEDULED ECONOFF'S BUFFET DINNER; AMBASSADOR'S RECEPTION FOR STATE OF INDIANA IOGA TRADE MISSION IS MARCH 6 AND EXIM CORDIALLY INVITED).

(6) EVENING: DINNER HOSTED BY SARG OR AMBASSADOR,
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PROVIDING FURTHER CONTACTS WITH SARG OFFICIALS AND PRIVATE SECTOR.

B. DAY TWO:

(1) APPOINTMENTS WITH PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS WHICH HAVE ALREADY EXPRESSED INTEREST OR WHICH MIGHT HAVE FUTURE INTEREST IN EXIM FINANCING: UNITEXTIL (HAD WANTED EXIM FINANCING FOR SOLAR GAS COMPANY'S \$19 MILLION WORTH OF GAS TURBINES); MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND PUBLIC SERVICES,

DIRGEN OF HOUSING RE PREFAB HOUSING PLANTS AND OTHER
TURNKEY PROJECTS; UNICHEM, GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION UNDER
MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, FOR TURNKEY PLANTS IN ENGINEERING
AND CHEMICAL SECTORS; PETROLEUM AND MINERALS MINISTRY AND
SUBSIDIARY OPERATING ARMS IN EXPLORATION, PRODUCTION,
REFINING AND TRANSPORTATION, AND ALSO IN PHOSPHATE PRODUCTION
(MACHINERY); MINTRANSPORT FOR RAILWAY REQUIREMENTS (DIR
GEN OF RAILWAYS LOCATED IN ALEPPO, AS ARE COTTON
GINNING INDUSTRY AND SOME COTTON MILLS), AND ALSO NEEDS
OF SYRIAN ARAB AIRLINES (ALONG WITH CALL ON SAAL TO
LEARN ABOUT THEIR FUTURE EQUIPMENT AND SPARES REQUIREMENTS);
MINCOMMUNICATIONS FOR LARGE ROAD BUILDING EQUIPMENT ORDERS,
LARGE MICROWAVE PROJECTS.

B. CALL ON COMMERCIAL BANK OF SYRIA GENERAL
MANAGER DIB ABU ASSALI AND HIS DEPUTY DARWAZA, AND ALSO POS-
SIBLY MINISTRY OF FINANCE.

(3) SECOND INFORMAL WORKING DINNER FOR FURTHER
CONTACTS WITH THOSE NOTED ABOVE AND OTHER PUBLIC AND
PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES.

C. DAY THREE: BELIEVE ABOVE SUGGESTED MEETINGS
WILL RUN OVER TO THIRD DAY AND WE HOPE EXIM OFFICIALS CAN
PLAN ON THREE FULL WORKING DAYS IN SYRIA.

4. HAVE JUST SEEN TEHRAN 1841 AND AS RESULT SUGGEST SYRIAN VISIT
BE PLANNED FOR MARCH 19 THROUGH 22, OR AS SECOND BEST
BET, MARCH 9/10 THROUGH MARCH 13/14.
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